



Department of Environmental Health Food and Housing Division



FOOD SAFETY AT COMMUNITY GARDENS

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will a community garden be required to obtain a health permit from the Food and Housing Division (FHD) of the Department of Environmental Health (DEH)?

No, a community garden will not be required to obtain a health permit. It is the responsibility of the garden participants to ensure they are in compliance with all other necessary agencies.

2. Can the produce grown in the garden be sold to the public?

Check with the local zoning agencies to ensure produce can be sold to the public at the site of the community garden. If the produce is sold at a farmers market, the garden must be approved by the Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures (AWM).

3. Can the produce grown at the community garden be used to make other food products (example: jams, salsas, pies)?

Selling other food products requires a health permit from FHD. All food products must be prepared in an approved, commercial kitchen.

4. Does pesticides use in the garden need to be reported?

Yes, pesticide use must be reported to the County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC). The CAC may be contacted at (858) 694-2739. Organic produce must be certified organic by the state and the CAC.

5. When should people not be allowed to work in the garden?

People should not be allowed to work in the garden if they have diarrhea or if they are unable to control the discharge of fluids from nose, mouth, or eyes. Pathogens they are discharging can be transferred to the produce or to the equipment they are sharing with other people. Any cuts or wounds on a person's arms, hands or legs should be covered.

6. Are animals (chicken, goats) allowed to be kept at the garden?

Check with the local zoning agencies to ensure animals are allowed on the community garden land.

If allowed, the animals should be excluded from the garden. Animal exclusion should occur so that they are not able to contaminate the soil, water source, produce, or garden equipment. Animals are capable of spreading pathogens wherever they have access. Handwashing facilities with soap, towels and running water should be available. People should be educated on handwashing between handling animals and working in the garden.

7. Can the products from the animals be sold to the public?

Raw milk or raw milk dairy products (example: cheese made from raw milk) are not allowed to be sold to the public. All raw milk and raw milk dairy products sold to the public must come from a facility that is certified by the California Department of Food and Agriculture for the production and sale of raw milk and raw milk products.



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8. Can manure be used on the community garden?

Commercially processed manure that is labeled for use on a vegetable garden may be used. Improperly composted manure can contribute to foodborne illness.

9. Can a community garden have a compost pile?

Yes, a compost pile is allowed. A Solid Waste Facility permit may be required if food waste is composted on site. Contact the local Solid Waste Enforcement Agency for additional information. The compost area must be maintained in a manner to keep vermin, animals and other insects away.

10. How can I find additional information on community gardens?

- San Diego Master Gardeners: www.mastergardenerssandiego.org
- Victory Gardens San Diego: www.victorygardenssandiego.com
- Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/awm/
- County of San Diego, Farm and Home Advisor: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/fha/

Please contact the Food and Housing Division Duty Specialist at (858) 505-6900, or by E-mail at fhdutyeh@sdcounty.ca.gov for answers to questions on food safety at community gardens.